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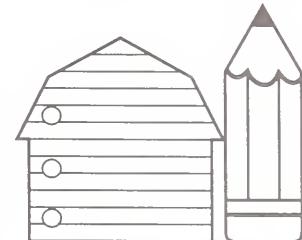
Ag in the Classroom

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Notes

United States
Department of
Agriculture



A bi-monthly newsletter for the Agriculture in the Classroom Program. Sponsored by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture to help students understand the important role of agriculture in the United States economy. For information, contact the AITC Director, Room 317-A, Administration Bldg., USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250-0991. 202/720-5727

Student Garden Feeds Homeless People

Sometimes, gardens grow more than fruits and vegetables. They can also raise awareness and create connections among people. That's the result of Valley Roots, a unique community garden in Albuquerque, NM.

Since last April, more than 1,400 students have been a part of this community garden, which includes 5 acres of land and 247 apple/pear trees. Many of the students come from the local public schools. "Schools are being forced to cut back on many wonderful projects and programs because of budget limitations," says Deryle Perryman, who directs the project. "We're trying to offer alternatives that will enhance the curriculum. As an independent nonprofit organization, we can supplement some of the things that schools are losing."

The garden uses all native seeds and no hybrids. The Native Seed Search from the Tucson Botanical Garden, which is trying to reestablish a seed bank from historical seeds, provided many of the seeds. This year, however, Perryman hopes to use seeds from the local area. "We're trying to use seeds specific to our own environment," he says.

Using the historical seeds has been a way to incorporate history lessons into the project. "We ask older people about how they used to garden," Perryman says. "We're trying to use gardening as a cross-curricular tool that incorporates math, science, English, humanities, and botany."

The garden also teaches students about organic gardening methods. Perryman approached local markets to ask them to donate produce that would otherwise have been thrown away to the compost pile. One natural food store

was so impressed that it became a partner in the project. Now they tell their customers that they can learn about organic gardening at Valley Roots. "Many times, these adult visitors are taught the techniques of composting by one of our fifth grade experts," Perryman says.

See *Garden*, page 7

Student gardeners in Albuquerque are learning about agriculture and feeding hungry people at the same time.



Editor's Note

The planning committee for the 1994 AITC Conference met in December, and do we have a great program in store for you! From fundraising to bottle biology, newsletters and exhibits to the International Candy Bar, there is something for everyone as concurrent sessions address topics geared for educators to use in their classrooms and administrators to improve their state programs. Kansas City is a great destination for touring, with a myriad of museums, amusement parks, baseball, and shopping at the nearby Crown Center. Look for the full agenda in the next NOTES issue, and mark your calendars for June 8th - 11th as Kansas City and the Hyatt Regency Crown Center welcome Ag in the Classroom to Ticket to Teamwork! In this issue of AITC Notes, check out a new feature highlighting some of the many interesting and diversified professional careers in agriculture. Wishing you all a very happy new year.—Laurie Green

Farm Family Makes Students Their Pen Pals

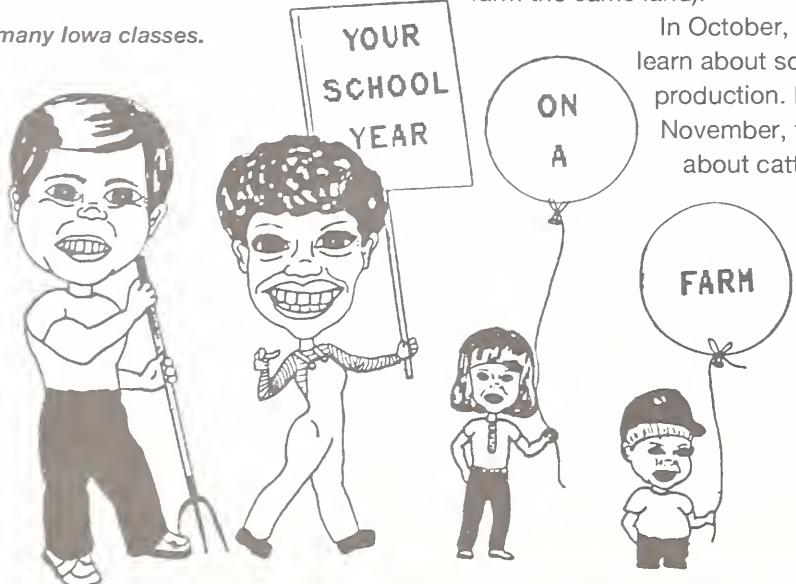
Each month, children in 18 Iowa classrooms wait anxiously for the mail to arrive. They're waiting for the latest letter from the farm family that has adopted their class. LaVon and Craig Griffieon send monthly letters and videotapes explaining life on the farm.

"Farmers need to tell their own story," says LaVon, the author of the family's monthly correspondence. "Statistics tell us that we divide into 2 percent farmers and 98 percent nonfarmers. And that big majority moves further away from direct contact with agriculture with each generation."

Classes adopted by the Griffieon family receive a letter that brings them up to date on the activities of the family, as well as introducing them to some of the issues that affect today's farmers. In September, for example, students learn the different ways the family has acquired land to farm. They also compare farming in the past (Craig Griffieon is the fourth generation in his family to farm the same land).

In October, students learn about soybean production. In November, they learn about cattle

LaVon Griffieon shares a year on the farm with many Iowa classes.



farming and commercial corn production. December's letter talks about snow removal, fences, and bookkeeping. The letters are so informative that some teachers make photocopies to send home to students' families. "They don't always know a lot about farming, either," LaVon says.

Each month's letter also includes a videotape that makes the farm come to life. Students have the opportunity to see the family they have been reading about.

One result is that LaVon has become something of a celebrity in her home town. "Now total strangers come up to me in the store to tell me how much they enjoy reading my letters," she says.

Each of the classrooms that is "adopted" by the family is entitled to visit the farm during the year. "They get off the bus and they feel like they know us and our family. Then the tour just cements that relationship," LaVon says.

Maintaining the correspondence is a major undertaking for the family. The Polk County Farm Bureau helps out by underwriting the cost of postage and buying the videotapes, but the family still makes a major investment of time and resources. "We wore out one video camera by following the tractor down the field," LaVon says. Still, she believes the rewards are worth it. "For a farm family that has to stay home anyway, it's a great family hobby."

After an article in Farm Journal, a young farmer in Africa began writing to the family. (The second letter he wrote was 28 pages long!) "This project has helped us get to know people around the world," LaVon says.

For more information on the Year On the Farm program, contact the Griffieons at 11655 NE 6th St., Ankeny, IA 50021.

Spotlight

Career Corner: Visitors Learn About Agricultural Careers in Science

They have examined the structure of DNA and learned how blueberry plants can be bred to resist cold weather. They study parasitic diseases of cattle and learn how trichinosis is spread through eating infected meat.

All these scientists are women, and all are featured in a new exhibit at the National Visitor Center of the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) in Beltsville, MD. The exhibit outlines the careers of 43 women scientists, all ARS employees ranging from entry-level technicians to senior researchers. The exhibit is designed to help female students identify with science and engineering and help teachers alert all students to such career paths.

"The exhibit reflects the diversity of student, post-doctoral scientists, and senior staff. We looked for younger examples and kept their descriptions in words that would be understandable to, say, 7th grade students," says committee co-coordinator Joan Lunney. She is also featured in the exhibit for her work on genetics of disease immunity of animals.

Some of the women featured in the exhibit are members of problem-solving

teams that now typify agricultural research. For example, an entomologist studying microbial ecology works for another scientist who finds bacteria strains that kill gypsy moths, corn and tomato worms, and other pests. A third team member is a technician who sets up greenhouse tomato, eggplant, and squash plants, as well as plant tissue growth media, for testing the effects of the bacteria on insects that attack the plants.

The exhibit also features the activities of the women scientists in their hours away from work. These include:

- A chicken-parasite researcher with a family of two children and a scientist/husband is preparing to return to her native Egypt as a professor in parasitology.
- A coordinator of the ARS Patent License Program, who manages a portfolio of 1,200 inventions, is also restoring a 102-year-old Victorian house in her spare time.
- Another parasitologist, working on a pig disease vaccine, says her civil engineer/husband "doesn't like pigs or parasites," but that her daughter does and hopes to become a veterinarian.

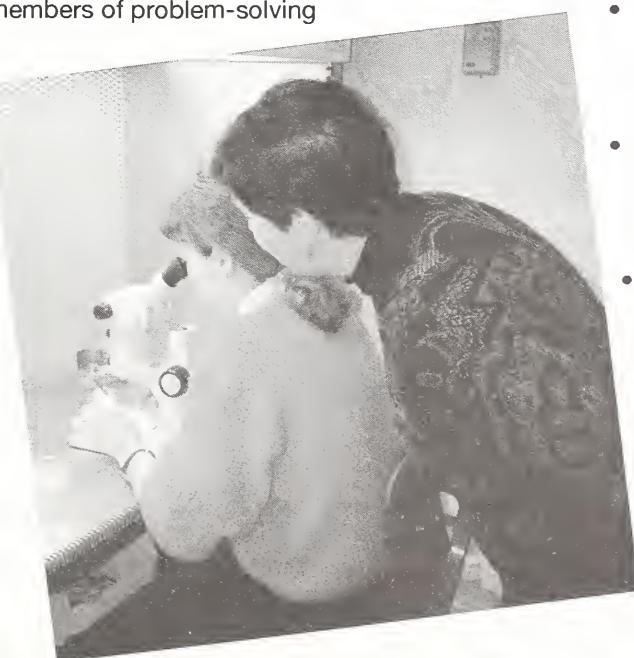
The ARS National Visitor Center is an educational facility devoted to telling the international story of agricultural sciences and engineering. For more details on careers in agriculture science, call (301) 504-9403.



Biological Laboratory

Technician Christine

Berry is one of 43 women scientists featured in a new ARS careers exhibit.



Iowa State Fair Exhibit Encourages AG Careers

"What will I be when I grow up?" From the time they are very young, children ponder that question. To help them develop some realistic career alternatives, the Iowa Foundation for Agricultural Awareness sponsored an exhibit that focused on three important agricultural careers.



At the Iowa State Fair, children learned that they have a future in an agricultural career.

The booth consisted of three plywood cutouts of career choices in agriculture. Children stood behind the cutouts and their parents took their picture.

The careers—a farmer, a farm broadcaster, and a chef—"were chosen because they were easy to depict graphically, and because they would appeal to children ages 4 through 10," says Dal Grooms, Public Relations Chair of the Foundation. "We also handed out a listing of more than 90 agricultural careers, and had stickers available to proclaim, 'I have a future in agriculture.'"

During the fair, more than 2,600 children stopped by to have their pictures taken. Volunteers who worked in the booth also had the opportunity to discuss careers in agriculture with the many adults who visited.



AG Jeopardy Reinforces What Students Have Learned

Teachers know that the real measure of success is not what they have *taught* . . . but what students have *learned*. In Grundy County, IL, an exciting project is helping students learn more about agriculture.

The Farm Bureau has organized a committee of 25 volunteers who visit each of the county's 24 fourth-grade classrooms throughout the year. Each time they visit, they teach a special lesson—corn production, beef production, soil and water conservation, for example.

"Volunteers make a year-long commitment to the program," says coordinator Stacy Shane. Although they may be nervous about their first appearance in a classroom, most are soon "hooked," she says. "There's nothing like having the kids shout 'Hooray!' when you walk in the door."

When they visit, volunteers bring a wealth of materials for the students. "We always start out with vocabulary words," Shane says. "We include a history lesson and then have students read some stories that give them more information about each commodity. Of course, we always include some word search puzzles and other activities as well."

Students are encouraged to keep the information in their AITC folders. Then in May, they take part in a county-wide competition to see who knows the most about agriculture.

Schools hold preliminary rounds of competition to determine which six students will

represent them at the county level. The round-robin tournament is held in the evening so parents and other students can attend. "We typically attract between 200 and 250 parents, as well as many students who did not qualify for their school's team," Shane says.

The questions, all developed by the volunteers who taught the lessons, are challenging. Typical questions include:

What is the most important natural resource to a farmer? (Correct answers are soil or water.)
Soy products, unlike food made from animal fats, are free of what? (Cholesterol)
Animals that eat both plants and meat are called _____? (Omnivorous, which is also a spelling word that can be used as a tie breaker.)

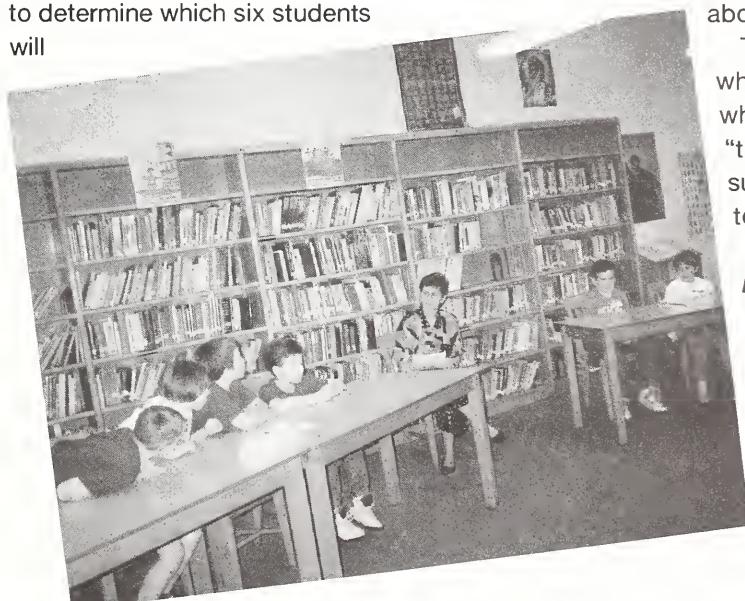
Each round consists of 50 questions. In the past, it has been a single-elimination tournament, but that may change. Generally, it takes about three rounds to crown a new winner.

The game encourages students to review what they've learned . . . and have fun while learning. "Even better," says Shane, "the game gets their parents involved. I'm sure a lot of siblings have learned things, too."

Editor's Note: Effective January 3, 1994, Stacy Shane is the new AITC state contact for Illinois. Ellen Culver has moved to Program Manager for Farm Bureau and will be Stacy's supervisor. Ellen, we thank you for all your work, and Stacy, welcome aboard!



In Grundy County, IL, Ag Jeopardy encourages students to learn more about agriculture.



Resources

Want to find a video about soybeans? Looking for a new way to teach a lesson on fireflies? Then you need the updated AITC Resource Guide, now available from the AITC office.

This comprehensive listing of videos, teaching packages, and other classroom materials will help teachers and AITC coordinators expand educa-

tional opportunities available to children. The materials are produced by AITC programs nationwide, community organizations, and others interested in agriculture and education. Many of the materials are available at little or no cost for use in the classroom. Call (202) 720-5727 for your copy.

Children's Video Shows Farm Animals Up Close

Videos are a popular teaching tool. They allow teachers to bring the entire world into their classrooms.

For example, a new children's video, "Farm Animals . . . Up Close and Personal," is becoming a favorite among the preschool set. This 30-minute

video tour of a farm features cows, pigs, ducks, goats, chickens, and horses.

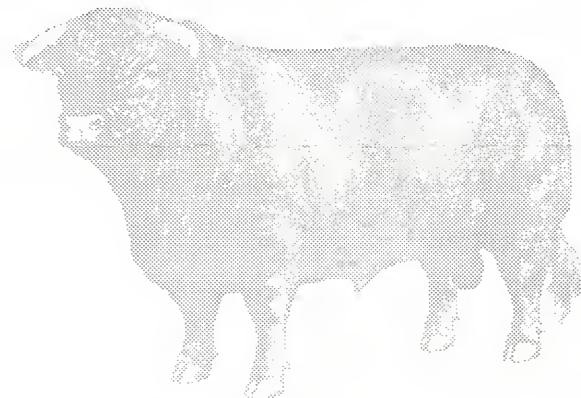
There's no sound track (except for the natural mooing and oinking of the animals).

There's no narration except a child's voice repeating the name of the animal at the beginning of each brief segment.

Designed for children ages 1-5, the video sells for \$14.95. Contact Stage Fright Productions, Box 373, Geneva, IL 60134.

Other videotapes that can be borrowed from the AITC National Office and copied include:

- **1986 Ag in the Classroom.** A 16-minute illustration of how Ag in the Classroom works. It offers a glimpse of enthusiastic teachers and students involved in AITC around the country.
- **21st Century Explorers.** A 20-minute video that illustrates to junior high school science students that agriculture is a highly sophisticated industry that has evolved through the use and application of science and technology. Students learn about the many career opportunities in agriculture.
- **Farmers . . . Entrepreneurs** was made for National Ag Day by Elanco. This 30-minute videotape is positive and upbeat, showing how



farmers are succeeding through innovative marketing and management. Elanco allows use of the tape for educational purposes.

- **America's Most Crucial Industry** helps viewers of all ages understand agriculture's vital role in the American economy. The 14-minute tape can also be purchased for \$12.00 from: Video Transfer, 4709-B Arundel Avenue, Rockville, MD 20852.



Garden, from page 1

Much of the produce grown in the garden is donated to Project Share, a community kitchen that feeds homeless and hungry people. "Students see that there's a real return for the work they're doing," Perryman says.

During the winter, students have been making adobe bricks. They will build an *horno* (an adobe oven) for baking. "That way, they'll be able to see all the steps in how food gets to their table. We're trying to help kids learn that tomatoes don't come from a box in the supermarket," Perryman notes.

"The further away we get from the land, the more it deteriorates," he concludes. "Kids are desperate to learn about the world around them. There's no better way than by getting their hands in the dirt."



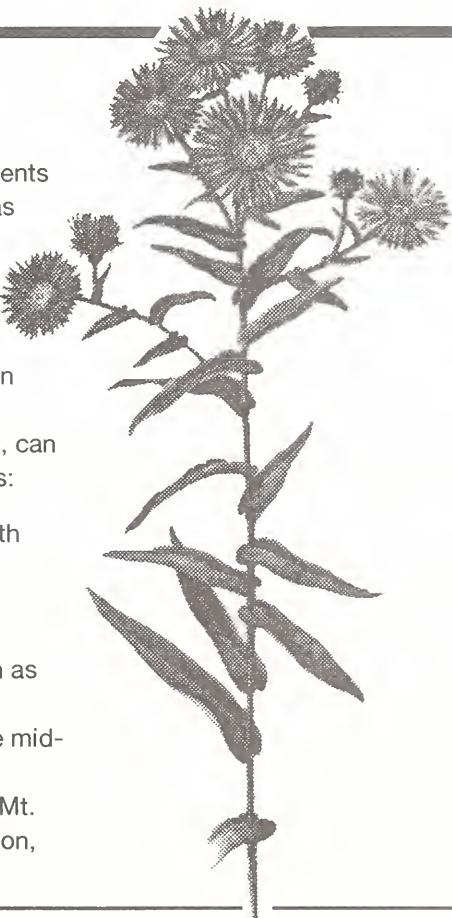
Colonial Era Seeds Available

Now there's a new way to help students understand more about what life was like in the Colonial era. The Mt. Vernon Ladies Association, which has preserved George Washington's estate, has also cultivated seeds of plants that might have been grown during his lifetime.

Seeds, which cost \$1 per packet, can be used to grow the following plants:

- Black-Eyed Susan, grown in North America in 1714
- Love Lies Bleeding, grown in the Colonies in the early 1700s
- New England Aster, in cultivation as early as 1710
- Globe Amaranth, grown in the mid-1700s

For your seed packets, write to the Mt. Vernon Ladies Association, Mt Vernon, VA 22121.



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The individuals listed here are key reference persons in each state. If you have any questions, want to make reports, or need more information about your state's Ag in the Classroom program, contact the following:

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